



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta  
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,  
Baile Átha Cliath 20, D20 HK69

Office of the  
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Deputy Jennifer Whitmore,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

31<sup>st</sup> May 2024

**PQ Number: 20922/24**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he is aware of long waiting list times for an initial assessment with National Counselling Services; what he is doing to reduce these waiting times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Jennifer Whitmore**

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Dear Deputy Whitmore,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) provides Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) to adults who have a medical card and free counselling to adults who have experienced childhood abuse or neglect (CAPA).

The NCS offers referred clients an initial assessment appointment to establish if counselling is the most appropriate service to meet their needs. Clients referred to CIPC are offered an assessment at the time they are allocated a counselling place. Counselling begins directly following the assessment appointment.

For clients referred to CAPA, the service for adults who have experienced childhood abuse, the service aims to offer assessment within 4- 6 weeks of date of referral. If counselling is assessed as suitable, clients are then placed on a waiting list for a counselling place. If it is assessed that counselling is not suitable a person may be referred back to their GP or primary care team and or directed to other appropriate services and supports.

The NCS is a demand led service, therefore waiting times vary across the country depending on referral rates, staffing levels and individual geographic factors.. The counselling contract offered is based on the assessed needs of the service user/client. As the number of service users/clients seeking counselling exceeds the number of counselling spaces available at any one time, there is a waiting time.

The table below shows the number of people waiting for assessment and the waiting times for initial assessment for clients referred to the CIPC and CAPA services based on latest available data. During



the period (January - April 2024) the NCS received a total of 7, 726 referrals (6, 832 to CIPC and 894 to the service for adults who have experienced childhood abuse).

**Table 1 Number of people waiting for initial assessment with the NCS at 30.04.2024**

<b>Waiting Time for Assessment [latest available data 30.4.24]</b>	<b>CIPC</b>	<b>CAPA</b>
Less than 1 month	595.0	86.0
1-3 Months	1, 570.0	87.0
4- 6 Months	1, 391.0	70.0
6 Months +	675.0	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4, 231.0</b>	<b>261.0</b>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours Sincerely,

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**Tony Mc Cusker**  
**General Manager**  
**National Mental Health Services**